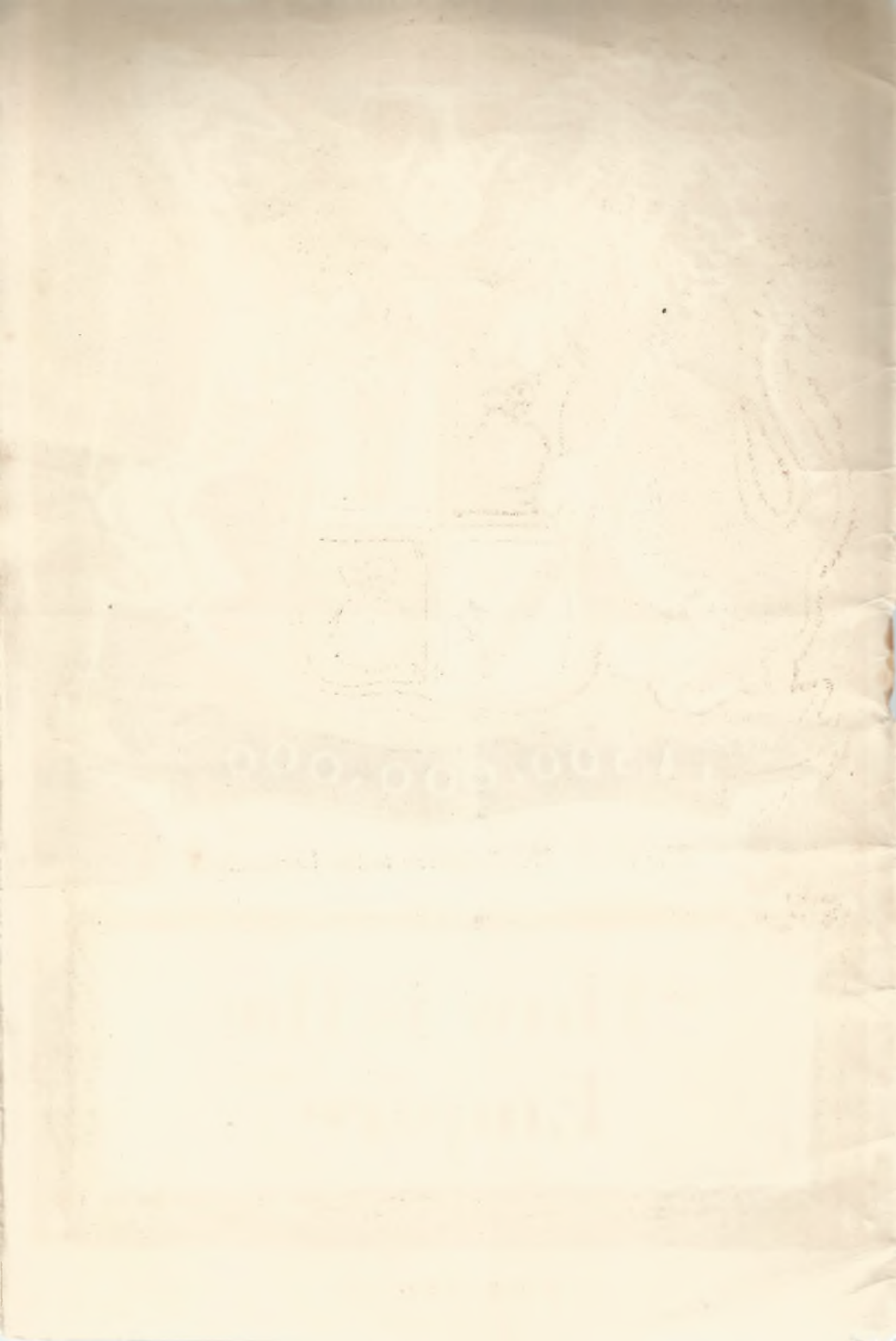




The Plain Man's Guide to the Coronation

“How is the
Empire”

ONE PENNY



When George V died,

the newspapers reported that his last words were "How is the Empire?" It was quite natural that he should ask this question, for the one function of the Crown which is insisted upon to-day is that of providing a personal link to bind together the varied assemblage of Dominions, Colonies, Protectorates and all the rest which go to make up the British Empire. King George's eldest son, Edward, was brought up to be an "Ambassador of Goodwill" and for years went travelling from one colony to another to "fit him," as *The Times* said, "to become the King-Emperor." He was trained to be an impressive figurehead, and the various Dominion governments were fully agreed with the National Government that he should not be allowed to fulfil his desire for a personal life of his own. But the abdication is already ancient history. Now we are celebrating the coronation of another King-Emperor, who has been considered better fitted to do what is expected of him. The insignia with which he will be invested at the Coronation will proclaim him ruler, not only of these small islands, but of countries in every part of the world.

"Representatives of Empire"

If you are in London to see the procession, or if the news reels bring the sight to you in your local cinema, you will be struck by the many gorgeously-clad "representatives" from all corners of the Empire. Fifty Indian States have sent five hundred of their most picturesque soldiery to line the route. There will also be members of the Indian air force and navy, forces from East, West and South Africa, from Palestine, Egypt, Ceylon and the West Indies. Troops from Australia, Canada and



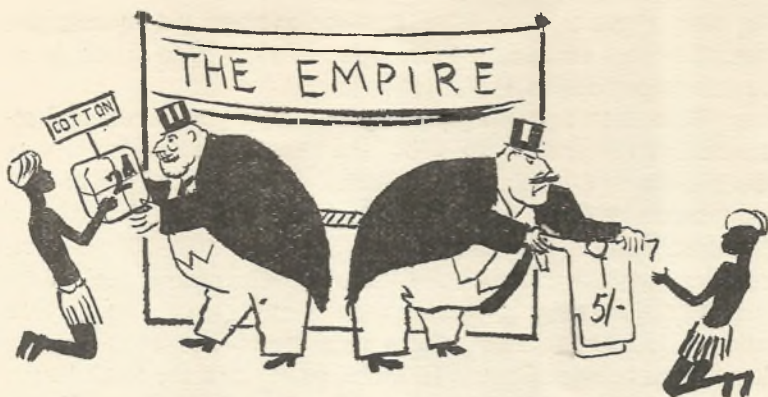
the other Dominions will be there to give you the impression that all is well with the Empire.

Perhaps you may wonder why the "representatives" of Empire seem to be almost exclusively soldiery. You will look in vain for an Indian peasant, a mill-worker from Bombay, a jute worker from Calcutta. Yet it is these who make up the Empire just as you make up the British people. The cup of tea which you will be thinking of longingly after hours of standing about in a crowd may come from leaf picked by child-labour in the plantations of Assam. The soap with which you washed in the morning contained palm oil made by Africans on the vast "concessions" in West Africa which enabled Unilever last year to make a net profit of £2,432,156. The Empire is not gay uniforms and waving flags and massed bands playing patriotic tunes. It is working men and women and children toiling that we may have our cup of tea or our pocket handkerchief. Let us look for a moment at the real empire of men and women and see how they live—and die.

INDIA

Let us begin with the "brightest jewel of the British Crown"—India. Here live some 350 million people of whom about 80 million are in the Native States. Nearly 90 per cent. of them are illiterate, yet the British have ruled large parts of the country for more than a century and a half. About 80 per cent. of the population are peasants. About 100 million people are always living on the starvation level. Sixty per cent. are born in debt, live in debt, and die in debt, unable even to pay off the interest charged by the moneylender. We have brought "law and order" to India. But from the standpoint of the peasant that means that behind the moneylender stands the whole might of the Government, and yet without going to the moneylender he cannot pay his taxes. The land revenue, which is paid by the peasants, amounts to about £28,000,000, nearly one-fifth of the total revenue of India. On the other hand, the landlord does not pay income tax on revenue from land.

India is a rich country. We read much in the popular press of Maharajahs who own several Rolls Royces, of the



Aga Khan who is one of the main supports of the Turf in this country, of business men such as Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji, Parsee shipping contractor who died recently and who, in addition to a house at Windsor with a private railway in the grounds, also had another house in the North as well as a palace in Bombay filled with costly treasures. What of the people of India? The Simon Commission Report said that "the average income of India per head is equivalent to less than £8, while the corresponding figure for Britain is £95." The yearly average income per head in India, therefore, amounts to one-twelfth of what it is in this country. As this is the average for all classes, it is obvious that the average for the workers is much lower. In the cotton mills of Bombay the highest wage is 14s. a week for a man and 6s. for a woman. In the jute mills of Bengal it is much less. Frequently the amount which the peasant has to pay in land revenue, taxes, rent and so on is one-half the value of his crops. And that is from a piece of land which, in most cases, is insufficient to support a family even if he received the whole crop. In the Presidency of Bombay, for instance, the Royal Commission on Agriculture showed that 48 per cent. of all the agricultural holdings consisted of less than five acres.

In the *Manchester Guardian* for January 17, 1935, occurs the following passage:

"The wages paid to the Indian peasantry are barely credible by outside standards; figures for a typical group of

farmers in the Punjab show that the average net income per man fell from about ninepence a day in 1928-29 to about three-farthings per day in 1930-31."

With such appalling poverty naturally goes weakened resistance to disease. In 1931 the death rate for India was double that of England and Wales. Over one-third of the population suffers annually from malaria—that is, over a hundred million people—and of these less than 10 per cent. receive medical treatment. While the Government of India spends £38,000,000 a year on armaments, it can only spare about £35,000 for anti-malaria measures. Yet malaria, we know, can be wiped out. In India, nearly half the total deaths were of children under 10 years of age, while in England and Wales the proportion is about 13 per cent.

Is this a Civilising Influence?

Frightful poverty and darkest ignorance are the causes of all this. We have seen that capitalism is doing its best to depress an already low standard of life to still lower levels. What about the combating of ignorance and illiteracy? The average amount spent on education in 1930-31 was just over 11 million pounds. In the same year nearly 44 million pounds was spent on the Army. Our civilising mission in India has certainly not expressed itself in education. Ten per cent. of the population able to read and write after generations of rule is not a very good record.

You will perhaps say—"That may be so, but at any rate we have conferred on the country the blessings of peace. If it was not for British rule Hindus and Muslims would be flying at each others' throats all over the place." For generations before the British came, Hindus and Muslims were living more peaceably together than, say, the English and the Irish. Hindus carried on the administration of the Muslim Empire. To-day in Hyderabad State, with a Muslim ruler, the Nizam, there is a Hindu Prime Minister and many Hindus are in the administration, while in Mysore, a Hindu state, the Prime Minister is a Muslim. It is noticeable that most of the cases of Hindu-Muslim riots occur in British India and not in the Native States. In Bengal, for instance, you have many Muslim peasants, while



ABOVE

BRITISH INDIA

The scene in the streets of Peshawar, April 23, 1930, a few minutes before British troops opened fire. The fury of the unarmed crowd was so great that the military were afterwards obliged to evacuate the city and according to the Daily Telegraph (May 6, 1930) it remained under native control for over a week. The conduct of two native infantry platoons was officially reported to have been "unsatisfactory."

RIGHT

SOVIET TADJIKISTAN

A Moscow engineer gives a former Russian "colonial" some advice on how to handle a tractor.





"British Capital"

"Divide and Rule." It is a maxim which all imperialists since have followed and none more successfully than the British.

How have the Indian people answered this exploitation and oppression? Particularly since the War there has been a growing movement among the masses, led by the Indian National Congress. The British authorities in India replied to this by taking violent action. In 1919, at Amritsar in the Punjab, when a huge unarmed crowd gathered for a peaceful demonstration, troops fired on the crowd, killing 379 people. At a subsequent inquiry in this country, General Dyer, the officer responsible, was deprived of his command, but the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, were exonerated and even praised. When ex-King Edward, as Prince of Wales, visited Bombay in 1921, the workers demonstrated. They were fired on and 53 were killed. In the same year there was a rising in the South among the Moplahs. Hundreds of them were taken prisoner, packed into goods vans and sent long distances in the stifling heat. As a result many of them were suffocated to death. At Meerut in 1931, 31 prisoners, including three Englishmen, were held in chains while their trial dragged on for three and a half years. They were charged with "conspiring against the King-Emperor" and were sentenced to years of rigorous imprisonment or transportation. (Most of

the moneylenders are mostly Hindus. In other parts of the country the moneylenders are often Pathans, while the peasants are Hindus. The natural result is that riots, the real causes of which are economic, arising out of exploitation of the peasants by the moneylenders, take on the colour of religious riots. The old Roman Emperors thought of the maxim—

the sentences, however, were later reduced in view of the great popular indignation). Actually they were prominent trade unionists and their crime was attempting to secure for the Indian workers some of the benefits which organised workers have in this country. Such are some of the methods of British imperialism to hold down the people of India, for in 1898 Lord Curzon observed : " India is the pivot of our Empire : If the Empire loses any of its Dominions we can survive ; but if we lose India, the sun of our Empire will have set."

Throughout all this violence by the British authorities the Indian National Congress was steadily increasing its influence with the masses. In 1931 came the famous Civil Disobedience Movement, when thousands of Indians, both men and women, refused to co-operate in any way with the government. Though they were attacked by policemen armed with staves and brutally bludgeoned they refused to answer with violence. They were crammed into the jails until there were about 80,000 political prisoners whose only crime was that of peaceably attempting to resist the brutalities of alien rule. Actually criminals had



" Cheap Labour "

to be released from the jails in order to make room for political prisoners. (2,000 are still in prison and have had no semblance of a trial.)

At last the British Government decided to give the people of India a Constitution. A long series of negotiations took place between the British on the one hand

and " representatives " of India who had been chosen by the British on the other. The result was a Constitution which was supposed to come into action, most appropriately, on April 1 of this year. Under this Constitution only 13 per cent. of the population is allowed to vote for candidates to the provincial legislatures, while in the Federal Government

elected delegates must always be in a minority to the Government delegates. All the real powers are reserved to the Governors. They can veto any legislation. They can dismiss any government and rule through the exercise of special powers. The only way in which any approach can be made to the problems of the people of India is first of all by taking some of the burdens off the starving masses and putting them on the rich. But the British power rests on the great landlords and the rich capitalists, as well as on the Army for which about half the central revenue is spent.

In spite of all sorts of obstacles placed in its way by the Government, Congress won a majority in six out of the eleven provinces. In order to be sure that it would be allowed to do something for the people of India, Congress asked the Governors in those six provinces to give them an assurance that the special powers would not be used to hinder Congress Ministers from carrying out their constitutional activities. The Governors refused this, and so Congress has refused office because it is well aware that it would not be allowed to do anything worth while to help the suffering people.

And remember that all this is done in the name of the King-Emperor. 100 million people are permanently on the starvation level, 320 million people are denied the possibility of learning to read and write, thousands of people are kept in prison without trial, ruling Princes can indulge in every sort of senseless extravagance, the City of London can extract a yearly tribute of tens of millions of pounds, that is what the Empire means to India.

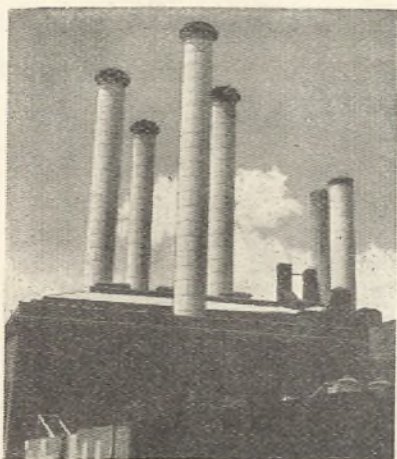
We have spent a lot of time in India, but after all it does contain about three-quarters of the population of the Empire. Now let us move on to the other side of the world, to the oldest Colony—Newfoundland. In an article headed "Desperate Newfoundland," published in the *Manchester Guardian* recently, it is stated that "no less than a quarter of the population is in receipt of government relief. This relief is equivalent to roughly half a crown a week paid in kind The plight of the people is appalling. Children are clothed in flour sacks, the people are woefully under-nourished, there are children

who have never been to school. A large proportion of the people are impoverished physically, mentally and morally." Here is a people of British origin driven to degradation by British Imperialism. Yet a few rich men are making fortunes from the paper, pulp and fishing industries of the country. Last year the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co., Ltd., made a profit of £200,000.

Now let's go back across the Atlantic to South Africa, where gold and diamonds come from. In the Union of South Africa live about a million and a half white people and some 12 millions of Africans. The latter have no representatives in Parliament. When they work in the mines they do so under military guard. They are not allowed to move freely about their own country, but must have a pass which contains their finger-prints (as though they were criminals) in order to travel. In many places they are not allowed on the same pavement as the whites. Even the churches are run on racial lines. There is no public place in which an African and a European can meet together.

In South Africa there are many Indians. Most of them were brought over on the indenture system to work and, after serving their time, settled down. Although they are British citizens as members of the Empire, they are not allowed to

own land and have to submit to all sorts of humiliating restrictions. But the capitalists do not have restrictions on their profits. In 1935 the net profits for De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines jumped to £2,122,360 as compared with only £768,760 for 1934. Rand Gold Mines Ltd. returned profits of £1,134,000 for 1935. The *Stock Exchange Gazette* mentions that since 1898 it has paid almost £23,696,500 to shareholders.



"But what has Lancashire gained?"

Sometimes you hear West Africa talked about as a Colony which is really being ruled for the benefit of the natives through their own chiefs. It is true that there is a Council of Chiefs and a Legislative Assembly, but it is noteworthy that there have been many changes in the chieftainships since the British took the country. The British Government takes good care that the chiefs shall be such as to "represent" the natives in the way the British want. Unlike the other colonies, the West African lands belong to the West African people, but the great trading companies such as Levers and Rowntrees through their vast concessions are able to impose what prices they like on the natives. Workers on the cocoa plantations get as little as fourpence a day for their labour; but last year Unilever made a net profit of £2,432,156 and Cadbury's had a credit balance of £1,626,000.

However, the West Africans are going to be represented at the coronation by Dr. Nanka Bruce. In 1935 and again in 1936 when he stood for Accra in the Legislative Assembly elections he was defeated by Mr. Kojo Thompson. Now Bruce, who does not even represent his own local constituents, has been appointed by the Governor, Sir Arnold Hodson, to represent West Africa at the coronation. The local Legislative Assembly was never consulted and their protests fell on deaf ears.

You can all remember what happened last year in Palestine. A general strike broke out and over a 100 Arab men and women were shot by British troops. Here again the policy of "Divide and Rule" is shown, for much has been made of Arab-Jewish riots. It is noteworthy that even at the height of the troubles there were many cases where Jewish workers helped Arab workers and vice versa. But Palestine is the Clapham Junction of the Empire, for it is here that the air routes to India and the East cross, while it borders on the Suez Canal, a vital artery of Empire. Besides, millions of gallons of oil are brought from Mosul across the desert to Palestine to feed the tanks and battleships of British militarism. We cannot afford unrest here so we suppress it with brutal force.

And now for one last leap before we leave our world

tour—this time right across the Pacific to Malaya. Here are great rubber plantations and vast tin mines. Both rubber and tin have been leaping up in price in the last months as both are vital for war preparations. But when the Chinese workers on the rubber plantations struck to get something approaching a living-wage, Indian troops were drafted in and the strikers were fired on, with many deaths resulting.



Life seems good for this Tadjik man... Yet it is only twenty years since he was ground down under the old Russian Empire.

What does all this mean to you, a British working man or woman? It is the big capitalist interests behind the National Government which is exploiting the peoples of the Empire. In the name of the King-Emperor and the National Government, peaceful workers and peasants are murdered, their children are kept without education, their whole lives are lived in wretchedness, misery and starvation. Remember, as your newspapers and radio call upon you to celebrate the coronation, that, in effect, the coronation is an endorsement and glorification of all this poverty and oppression which is imposed on the Colonial millions. That is one of the main reasons that our Party, the Communist Party, opposes the coronation. It is quite right that the note of the coronation should be military display, for it is by force and force alone that we hold this Empire which we won by force. That is why the peoples of the Empire are unrepresented here, but in their place come jewelled Maharajahs, whose every jewel comes from the blood and sweat of their tortured peasantry, and troops, with arms kept from rusting idle by being used against workers whose only crime is to demand a little share in the land which is their own by right of birth. The late Lord Brentford, better known as Jix, said in 1925, "We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it. . . . I am not such a hypocrite as to say that we hold India for

the good of the Indians. We hold it as the finest outlet for British goods in general and for Lancashire cotton goods in particular."

But what has Lancashire gained? Has any attempt been made to raise the standard of living of the Indian workers and peasants so as to provide more work for Lancashire? To the capitalist "patriotism is not enough." To get his profits he exploits the Empire and uses the lowered standards of living both to collect more profits for himself and to make a drive on the workers at home. The jute workers of Bengal are pitted against the Dundee workers, Indian textile workers against Lancashire workers, Lascar seamen against British seamen.

A great outcry has been raised against Franco using Moorish troops in Spain, but he was only following the example of his imperialist masters. British Imperialism used Indian troops in France and then subjected Iraq by their means. French Imperialism ravaged Syria with Senegalese soldiers and has used African troops against French strikers in France. If it should become necessary, British Imperialism would not hesitate to use Colonial troops against the British working class.

The interests of the workers and peasants throughout the Empire are at one with the interests of the British workers. We cannot be free unless they are freed. Their fight for freedom and democracy is our fight. But remember their fight is much harder if we merely look on. They have not only their own capitalists to fight against but the massed power of British capitalism. Every step that we take in the fight against our own capitalists is a step towards freeing the oppressed Colonial peoples. And we know now what such peoples can do when they are freed of the burdens and shame of capitalist oppression. In the Soviet Union are 189 different peoples, some of them still in the most primitive stage. Now they are developing their own country. Soviet Russia is now the second country in the world in industrial production. Now there are less than 2 per cent. of illiterates, where formerly in some places there were over 90 per cent. and the average was well over 50 per cent. And they stand solid for peace.

So long as you have Empires you will have war. The war for the redistribution of the world has started. Italy has grabbed Abyssinia by the foulest means, which stink in the nostril of any decent person. Germany is demanding colonies. Both of them are attempting to enslave Spain. And our National Government is going to spend £1,500,000,000 on armaments, "for defence" they say. But it is you who pay for it all, you and your brother workers throughout the Empire. Wages have risen a little because you have fought for them, but prices have risen still more and are still rising. The only way out is to fight to keep what democratic liberties we still have and to extend these liberties to our colonial brothers and sisters.

Marx said, "A nation that oppresses another cannot itself be free." Therefore our course is clear. First, we must recognise the fact that we have a common cause with the colonial peoples against a common enemy—our own rich capitalists. We do not stand alone in the struggle. We cannot win freedom and Socialism for ourselves unless we try to help them to win them also. Second, we must fight to win for the colonial peoples full democratic rights and civil liberties. We must strengthen the whole struggle for the independence of the colonies, we must weaken the power of British Imperialism. Thus we shall bring the day nearer when the British Commonwealth will be bound together, not through personal allegiance to any King-Emperor, but through the class allegiance of worker to worker, when we and our colonial brothers and sisters will be able to join with the workers of other nations in the Socialist Commonwealth of the workers of the world.

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